

# Business Growth and Adaptions Grant Frequently Asked Questions



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For this document, the West of England area refers to the Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire local authority areas.

## Business Eligibility

Where does my business need to be based?

Businesses with a trading and/or registered address in the West of England Combined Authority area can apply for a Business Growth and Adaptions Grant (Fund 1 and Fund 2). The Combined Authority area is the Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, and South Gloucestershire local authority areas.

Businesses in the North Somerset authority area are not eligible for this grant.

To check your local authority area please visit [Find your local council](#) on the Government website

Is there a minimum and maximum level of employment I need to meet as a business?

There is no minimum level of employment for the Business Growth and Adaptions Grant. However, this grant is for Small and Medium Enterprises and so you must not employ more than 249 employees nationally.

I'm a Sole Trader, can I apply for a grant?

Sole traders can apply for Fund 1, this means you can apply for a grant of £6,000 - £10,000 if you meet all other eligibility criteria.

Please see criteria on [the Growth Hub website](#).

Do I need to have a physical business premise to be able to apply?

No. Businesses run from a home, those that are mobile (tradesperson) and those that are based in 'co-working' spaces are allowed to apply.

Are there any restrictions in my business operation or business sector?

There is no restriction on business operation or business sector if they are not assessed as causing environmental or social harm.

I regularly trade to/with the West of England area, can I apply?

No. You must have a registered or trading address in the West of England Combined Authority area.

If you are using a trading address to apply, we may ask for proof of address. For example, a letting agreement for the premise.

I work from home in the West of England area, can I apply?

Only if your business is run from home and does not have an alternative trading address. If you work from home but your business is based outside of the area you are not eligible for funding.

**Do I need to be VAT registered, or are VAT exempt businesses able to apply?**

You do not need to be VAT registered. Non-VAT registered and VAT exempt businesses can apply.

**Do I have to consent to a credit reference check?**

Yes. To comply with our due diligence procedures, we must complete a credit reference check on the business. We will not be able to accept your application if you do not permit us to undertake the credit reference check.

If you are a Sole Trader or a Partnership, you will need to provide your self-assessment tax return for your credit check.

**Are charities allowed to apply?**

Registered Charitable Companies can apply for the larger grant 2 fund but not the smaller fund 1.

**Can Social Enterprises and Community Interest Companies apply?**

Yes, if they meet all the eligibility criteria for the scheme.

**Can I apply if I own a franchise?**

Yes. Single and multiple ownership franchises can apply if they meet the Small and Medium Enterprise eligibilities and are in direct ownership.

**Do I need a business bank account?**

Yes.

You are required to provide the bank details of the business you are applying for, and the application must be made by someone who is named as being responsible for the bank account. This bank account must also be the account you use to pay for the items you are applying for in your application and be used as evidence of defrayal in your grant claim.

**What if I don't have a business bank account?**

You will need to provide the bank account details of the bank account you use to manage your business. This bank account must also be the account you will use to pay for the items you are applying for in your application and be used as evidence of defrayal in your grant claim.

**I own or am a director of more than one business. Can I apply for a grant for each business?**

Yes. If each business is a separate entity and meets the eligibility requirements.

You will have to make an application for each business separately.

Can I apply for both funds?

No, you can only apply to one fund.

Do I have to pay the grant back?

No. If you comply with the requirements set out in your grant offer letter you will not have to pay the grant back.

## Application

Do I have to use the online grant application system?

Yes. The system is in place to ensure that your application can be received, assessed, and paid as safely and securely as possible.

In circumstances where an applicant is unable to use the online application system due to accessibility issues, we will provide an alternative option.

What can be funded?

The eligible expenditure requirements are broad; grants can help purchase products or equipment to help your business grow or adapt. Purchases must help you to increase or improve production, start production, or to adapt to changes in legislation, relating to production, from the last 3 years.

The fund cannot be used for:

- Additive manufacturing and 3D Printing
- The Industrial Internet of Things (sensors)
- Artificial intelligence and cognitive learning
- Data and systems integration
- Robotics and process control automation
- Virtual, augmented, and mixed realities
- Industrial cybersecurity
- Big data and analytics
- Costs associated with the production and protection of [intellectual property](#)
- Products that only improve [energy efficiency](#) of the business' own buildings and operations
- Vehicles not used in the production line
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Research activities
- Pre-production, proof of concept and prototyping activities
- Standalone\* training
- Professional qualifications, accreditations/standards
- Revenue costs including utilities, rental, existing staff costs, memberships, marketing plans and advertising
- Capital works to non-commercial premises
- Capital works to commercial premises, without a min 5-year lease.
- Standalone\* consultancy, salaries/overheads

- Standalone\* IT hardware and software
- Stock
- Proposals that have the potential to cause environmental or social harm
- Video, audio and photographic equipment
- Printing production equipment for the purpose of printing third-party designs or concepts.
- Kitchen equipment, machines or appliances for the purpose of increasing the in-house service of food and drink.

### Is the grant fund competitive or first come first served?

The funding will be awarded on a competitive basis, this means the date you submitted your application has no effect on its likelihood of approval. Applications will be assessed on the eligibility compliance and stated impact of the funding.

You must be as accurate as possible in the figures you provide in your application form. You will be required to report on your progress after the grant is awarded. Please see [Will I need to provide the West of England Combined Authority with a regular progress report?](#) for details

### Can I apply to fund my present business operation(s)?

The fund cannot support existing costs, overheads, or expenditure.

### Can I apply for costs I have already incurred on a new business operation?

Funds cannot be applied for retrospectively, only planned future expenditure can be applied for.

### Can I apply for salary costs?

No, if salaries are the only project costs, they will be considered ineligible. If an application is made to support an eligible project and the employee is focussed full-time on the project then salaries may be considered. These costs must be within the expenditure window and must be evidenced. Salary costs must not exceed 25% of the project total.

### Can I apply for consultancy costs?

If consultancy costs are the only project costs, these will not be considered eligible. Consultancy costs in relation to the project may be considered.

### Can I apply for kitchen equipment costs?

Kitchen equipment is considered an eligible cost, if it relates to the production of a specific item that could be packaged and retailed. Equipment that will be used for the sole purpose of increasing a service provision within a business, i.e. serving food or drink items in house or through a takeaway service, would not be considered eligible.

Can I apply for printing equipment costs?

Printing equipment is an eligible cost, if it supports the direct production of a specific product. Equipment to support printing production as a service would not be deemed eligible.

Can I purchase products, goods, services and consultancy on a non-commercial basis?

No

Can I purchase second-hand products and equipment?

Yes

Do I need to invest my own funds?

Yes

You need to provide at least 20% of the purchase costs in match funding. For example: if you purchase a piece of equipment costing £10,000 you could receive a grant of £8,000.

Can the match funding come from another grant fund?

No. The match funding must come from your business.

Can the match funding be 'in kind'?

No. The match must be physical investment, not the equivalent time spent or the value of an existing product or service.

Can I apply for a grant that pays for a proportion of the project, but not all of it?

Yes. You only need to provide a minimum of 20% match funding; your business is allowed to provide more than 20% of the project costs. However, we cannot provide more grant funding than you have been awarded or that exceeds the grant limit.

When will I hear back?

We aim to get back to all applicants with a decision within two months of the application deadline. However, this timeframe is not guaranteed.

Can I amend my application once I have submitted it?

No, submitted applications are final.

## Accepting the Grant

How will I know if I have been awarded a grant?

We will email you to inform you if you have been successful in your application for a grant. Please ensure you regularly check your junk folder for our emails.

How do I accept the grant offer?

We will send you a Grant Offer Letter, defining the terms and conditions of the grant. You will need to sign this and return it to the Combined Authority within 14 calendar days of receiving it.

We will also provide you with a Subsidy Control Declaration letter, you will need to complete this and return it with your Grant Offer Letter.

Failure to return the completed documents will cause your offer to be revoked. Details about how to return the documents will be included in your award email.

Once I have my application approved, can I change what I want to spend the funding on, if it is to the same level?

No. You may only purchase the items detailed as eligible in your Grant Offer Letter.

If my costs increase, can I claim more than I originally applied for?

No. You can only claim the maximum level of grant funding we have awarded you and confirmed in your Grant Offer Letter.

If my costs are reduced, can I claim for a smaller grant than I originally applied for?

Yes. If you are still claiming for the same items with lower costs and this does not fall below the minimum grant amount for the fund (£6000 for Fund 1 and £10,001 for fund 2). Please contact us as soon as possible to inform us of this change.

## Claiming the Grant

How long do I have to claim the grant?

You have three calendar months from the date of the Grant Offer Letter to claim the grant.

Can I claim for incurred/upfront costs?

No. The grant can only reimburse defrayed costs, this means you must purchase your eligible items before claiming the grant.

Can I submit multiple claims?

No. You can only claim the grant once your project has completed. Claims cannot be paid in instalments.

Can I request an extension to my claim deadline?

No. We are not able to provide any extensions.

What do I need to submit to claim the grant?

You need to return the signed claim letter included in your Grant Offer Letter, completed Schedule of Costs attached with your Grant Offer Letter, with evidence of expenditure, within three calendar months of the date of the Grant Offer Letter.

Full details of evidence requirements are included in the [Claim Guidance](#).

What is considered evidence of expenditure?

At a minimum, you will need to submit an VAT invoice and/or receipt for each purchase, accompanied by the business bank statement, identifying each purchase. Your bank statement must clearly show the name of the bank, the name of the account, account number and sort code.

Full details of evidence requirements can be found in our claim guidance, which will be sent with your award confirmation email and can be accessed on [the Growth Hub website](#).

Will the Combined Authority reimburse the cost of each invoice inclusive of VAT?

If you are not VAT registered, we will pay claims Gross of VAT. If you are VAT registered, we will pay claims Net of VAT.

What if I change my mind or my business circumstances has changed, and we no longer wish (or we are not in a position) to spend the grant offered to us?

Please inform us in writing as soon as possible if this is the case, ideally before committing to any spend or raising orders.

Will I need to provide the Combined Authority with a regular progress report?

You are required to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the grant scheme, 12 months after being awarded the funds. This will be via an online questionnaire and a sample number of businesses will undertake a telephone interview. You will be asked to report on your progress in meeting the outcomes you stated in your application.

What if the project that I am awarded the grant for does not result in the anticipated uplift; will the grant be taken back?

If you have not met the outcomes identified in your application and can demonstrate that this is not due to mismanagement of the grant funds, we will not seek to take back these funds. Full details can be found in your Grant Offer Letter.

## Further information

For more information on the Business Growth and Adaptions Grant please read our other grant guidance on [the Growth Hub website](#).

If you can't find what you're looking for please email [EnterpriseGrants@WestofEngland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:EnterpriseGrants@WestofEngland-ca.gov.uk). We aim to respond to enquiries within two working days. If you can't email us, please call 0117 456 6955 and leave a message with [the Growth Hub](#) team. A member of the grant team will call you back.